Dear [Name],

I would like to thank you for your letter, on behalf of eight environmental groups, addressed to Executive Vice-President Timmermans, Commissioner Simson and Commissioner Breton, outlining your views on hydrogen.

On 8 July 2020 the Commission adopted two complementary strategies, on energy system integration and on hydrogen, contributing to the transition to climate neutrality by 2050, as well as to the zero pollution ambition.

The Energy System Integration Strategy gives priority, first, to a more ‘circular’ energy system, with energy efficiency at its core, where the least energy-intensive choices are prioritised. Second, it stresses that the potential of renewable electricity in sectors so far dominated by fossil fuels (such as transport and heating) has to be better exploited. Finally, it explains how renewable and low-carbon fuels, including hydrogen, will be deployed to enable the decarbonisation of sectors (such as industry and some transport segments), which are difficult to electrify directly.

The Hydrogen Strategy puts the priority on the deployment of renewable hydrogen: not only is it the most compatible option with the EU’s climate neutrality and zero pollution goal, but it is also an enabler of the integration of growing shares of variable renewables in the energy system and of the decarbonisation of sectors that lag behind, like transport and industry. Renewable hydrogen will also support European industrial leadership on electrolysers, with positive impacts on jobs and growth in Europe. In addition, several studies expect that renewable hydrogen will become competitive with fossil hydrogen by 2030. In the short and medium term, however, other forms of low-carbon hydrogen are needed, primarily to rapidly reduce emissions from existing hydrogen production and support the parallel and future uptake of renewable hydrogen.

Transport & Environment

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Against this backdrop, the hydrogen strategy sets concrete objectives to install at least 6 GW of renewable hydrogen electrolysers in the EU by 2024 and 40 GW by 2030. It also identifies two main lead markets, industrial applications and mobility, where renewable hydrogen is key to developing a climate-neutral economy.

To support the necessary investments along the whole hydrogen value chain, the Commission has launched the European Clean Hydrogen Alliance. The Alliance is built upon the principles of openness, cooperation, inclusiveness and transparency and will work towards significantly contributing to EU greenhouse gas emission reduction objectives by 2030. The alliance will focus on developing an investment agenda and a pipeline of concrete projects, including all stakeholders and technologies that in best way contribute to the climate neutrality objective. We count on civil society involvement in the Alliance.

Furthermore, the Commission will explore demand-side policies in end-use sectors to accelerate the development of hydrogen applications. It will work to introduce a common low-carbon threshold/standard for the promotion of hydrogen production installations based on their full life-cycle greenhouse gas performance, and to introduce a comprehensive terminology and European-wide criteria for the certification of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen.

For further exchanges on the policy dimension of hydrogen in the energy transition, I invite you to contact [email protected] in DG Energy (e-mail: [email protected]).

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Diederik Samsom